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Montgomery Library Bars Mailer's Viet Book

Montgomery County's public libraries have refused to stock Norman Mailer's new novel, but the County Council was assured yesterday the decision was not related to Mailer's political activities or personal life.

William L. Sollee, a Rockville resident, wrote to the Council asking for an inquiry about the decision not to purchase the controversial book, "Why Are We in Vietnam?" He enclosed favorable reviews of the book from The Washington Post and the New York Times.

Robert A. Passmore, assistant to the county manager, said library officials told him the decision was based solely on the book's literary merit.

The decision not to purchase Mailer's book was prompted by two reviews by library staff members. Jane Hirsch, an assistant librarian at the Bethesda branch, wrote: "Sorry—this one is beyond me. This is either a classic or nothing at all."

Mary Dulany, coordinator of adult services, added a recommendation against purchase of the book to her finding that 'this is such a poor book that I am not willing to inflict it on our borrowers." She added, however, that "it is important as a demonstration of the uses of language."

George Moreland, director of County libraries, said the system has six of Mailer's books, but rejected "The Deer Park" because "it isn't a good book," and said the same rule was applied to the new volume.

Moreland backed up the library's decision by painting out that public libraries in New York, Baltimore and Washington have rejected the book although it is available in Prince George's County libraries.

In Washington, a library official confirmed that the book has not been acquired but said it still is under consideration.